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Short articles in favor of integrated Catholic schools are presented by eight teachers, religious and lay, in the New Orleans, Louisiana, parochial school system. Emphasis is placed upon the idea that one cannot effectively teach the quality of man under God and the universality of the teachings of the Catholic Church while practicing racial segregation.

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SOUTHERN CATHOLIC TEACHERS *favor* INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch
Catholic Committee of the South
Commission on Human Rights
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In Praise of Catholic Teachers

The Catholic schools of New Orleans, both parochial and private, have a high reputation for scholastic achievement and for the moral standards of their children. This enviable record has been made mainly through the generous, intelligent and kindly service of hundreds of dedicated Catholic teachers, both religious and lay.

The Catholic elementary schools are in transition now from a racially segregated to an integrated system. Besides its dedicated teachers, who are Catholic first, and Negro and white afterwards, the Catholic school has certain decided advantages for desegregation. All the imaginary difficulties raised against integrated schools - the questions of moral, intellectual and health standards - have already been settled in the Catholic schools. Our schools can be and are, selective. The child who fails to meet the set norms of behavior, intelligence and health is not admitted, or is flunked out.

From more than a hundred interviews with Catholic elementary school teachers, the Commission on Human Rights selects these representative samples for publication. These teachers are speaking for the faculties of all Catholic elementary schools in our archdiocese. They represent the wonderfully Christ-like attitudes of the trained personnel to whom we commit, gratefully and proudly, the early education of our children. May the Divine Teacher continue always to give His supporting grace to them.

Problems Are Nothing New

It is sometimes said that school integration presents new and difficult problems. Problems are nothing new to a parochial school teacher. We had them yesterday, we have them today, and we will have them as long as our schools are made up of groups of children learning how to study, pray, work and play together.

We have coped with jealousies, bad tempers, imaginary hates, differences and clashes of personalities. We have coped with parents, too, some of whom are highly biased in favor of their children, and are often disappointed that we too cannot show the same favoritism. Through it all, our parochial schools have flourished, and parents continue to plead for admission of their children even when our classes are overcrowded.

We have not failed either the children or their parents. We do not believe that the problems of an integrated Catholic school are any different in kind, degree or number, from those with which we are daily and successfully coping. Race makes no essential difference in the school child. Whether the child is white or colored, he still has an individual personality, and he still has doting parents. If in a segregated school we can handle the problems rising from youthful personalities and adult parents, we can handle them also in an integrated school.

Sister Jane Frances, M.S.C.

Saint Rita School

Segregation Hurts Both Races

The Christian way of life should stem from a sound Christian system of education. Praying, working and living together in the unity of love and justice is the Christian way of life. This we have not learned, and this we are not teaching, in segregated schools. There is little justice, and less joy, in a school system which exemplifies racial differences.

Segregation hurts both those who impose it and those who bear it. To the true follower of Christ the burden in conscience of the segregators is greater than the burden in body of the segregated. But why should we enforce this detrimental pattern on the little children of both races in the Catholic schools? Both the white child and the Negro child suffer from it, because neither is learning the true Christian way of life.

It seems strange to me, a Negro teacher, that there should be any question as to which is better, a segregated or an integrated school. The Catholic school curriculum is designed to bring the child and the truth happily together. Precept through example must be the way of the teacher, the school and the curriculum. The teacher's role is dedicated to the guidance of all children to the fundamental truths in the spirit of Christ-like joy. This cannot be fully realized by the teacher in a segregated school.

Miss Loretta M. Butler

Saint Philip School

Segregation is Unreasonable

As a religious teacher in an elementary school, I consider integrated education preferable to, and more reasonable than, segregated education. Teachers are expected to be reasonable and intelligent people. The notion of putting pupils in separate schools, merely on a basis of their race seems to be both unreasonable and unintelligent.

I try to teach the story of the Creation, that all human beings are descended from the same first parents. I try to teach the great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." I try to teach the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Around these three fundamental Christian doctrines there would rise a great big question mark if I also tried to teach the justification of racial segregation.

Brotherhood under God, universal love of neighbor, membership in the same family of Adam and Eve - these fundamentals make little sense to a child until they are reduced to concrete reality. The small child of God can be expected to take only so much on faith; after that, he too finds it unreasonable that a racially segregated school system can possibly exist side by side with the basic principles of Christian unity.

Sister M. Consuela, O. Carm.

Saint James Major School

The Child is Confused

Segregation has no place in Catholic schools because it adds to the confusion in the children' minds. The child of today is already confronte with many contradictions between teaching and pra ctice. His teacher tells him he must not miss Mas and perhaps his father goes fishing every Sunda His teacher tells him he must love everybody; bu perhaps he hears his mother saying nasty things a bout the neighbors.

In the segregated school the white child i confused when his teacher explains that all peopl are equal before God and in the American society He must question whether this is true because h sees Negro children going to separate and inferio schools. His own school won't allow them to atten With this confusion and contridiction, should w be surprised that the child begins to feel tha everything he is taught is really a myth.

As Catholics we say that we believe all tha Christ taught, and that we are not free to believ only what is convenient, comfortable or preferabl We owe it to our school children to practice ou Christian teaching, to love and to treat equall every child of God. In an integrated school we ca help to remove confusion and contradiction fro the minds of children. We must convince them tha prejudice is unholy and that there is no doubl standard in race relations.

Miss Dorothy V. Duett

Saint Cecilia School

An Excellent Laboratory

You cannot understand people unless you know them. Because so many whites have had no personal contact with Negroes of their own age and interests, their ideas concerning Negroes have been largely influenced by the prevailing prejudices of the society in which they have been reared. This is true also of the Negro's misunderstanding concerning the white people. Segregated schools have prevented understanding across racial lines.

The integrated school provides an excellent laboratory to discover both the shallowness of racial prejudice and the truth of human equality. Once given the chance, our Catholic youth are quick to recognize the reality of the universal brotherhood in Christ. The true meaning of "liberty and justice for all," and of "love thy neighbor as thyself" can be animated by concrete, living example.

We have tried segregated schools and have driven God's children further apart. The laboratory of racially segregated schools has given definitely negative results. The new experience of racially integrated schools must necessarily have positive results. Pupils are proud to be part of a really Catholic system which is a worthy reflection of the principles of Christianity and democracy.

Sister M. Consolata, O. Carm.

Mt. Carmel Elementary School

Advantage for Teachers

For a long time now there has existed a kind of complacent mediocrity toward the practice of Christian and democratic principles. Educators, by their bland acceptance of racially separated schools, have been a prime example of this. We teachers have been complacent and mediocre, and this means that we have been satisfied with something less than the best.

We can no longer deny the fact that segregation in education is inherently unequal - our Supreme Court has advised us on that point. We can no longer deny that segregation based on race is immoral - our Archbishop has made that point very clear. From now on, a teacher who continues to believe in segregation continues also to be satisfied with mediocre education, mediocre democracy, mediocre Christianity.

Therefore, I think that an integrated school system is a tremendous advantage for teachers. It lifts them out of a situation in which they are tempted to be complacent and in which they have been forced to be mediocre. In an integrated school we teachers cease to contradict the Christian virtues and to compromise the democratic principles which we are trying to teach to young minds. We do not have to answer - or to evade - the searching questions about the contradiction and the compromise of principles.

Miss Betty Jean Brocato

Holy Name of Jesus School

We Want to Please Our Lord

Our Blessed Lord told His Apostles to go out and teach all nations. Down through the centuries the successors of the Apostles have carried out this divine mandate. Today in the South teachers in Catholic schools are continuing this tradition under the direction of the Bishops. Catholic teachers have the privilege of reaching all nations, and all of the people of each nation.

An elementary school which places barriers of race against some children is unlikely to have the greatest success in teaching. Unnecessary restrictions and limitations tend to lessen the spirit of universal charity; they narrow down the teachers' opportunities to a small group of children; they cast shadows before the children's vision of an all-embracing Christianity. The teacher is constrained to make excuses, the child is hurt and bewildered, and the general progress of education gets slowed down by segregation.

Integrated schools are open to all children regardless of race. It stresses the universal embrace of Christ's teaching and of the Church's educational effort. Our Lord would be pleased to know that we allow all the little ones to come to Him. We know that skin-color means nothing to Him, either in His teachings or in His children. Let us please Him and follow His example.

Sister Marie George, S.S.F.

Saint Joan of Arc School

Reaching the Parents

Children learn from adults - but, can adults learn from children? If you ever hear a young school child say that he hates a person of another race, religion or nationality, you can be sure that he picked up this prejudice from his parents or other adults. Children do not come into the world with bigotry and prejudice in their minds. They are easily impressed and they readily accept what they learn from example.

If the child is taught from the beginning that all men are equal regardless of the color of their skin; if he sits beside children of another race in the classroom; if he plays with them in the schoolyard - then there is little chance that he will grow up with racial hatred and malice in his heart. By his experiences in an integrated school, he will be a better Catholic and a better American - and this is exactly what our schools are supposed to be making him.

But the properly trained child may also influence his improperly trained parents. If the child takes his thoroughly Christian and democratic ideas home, he may soften the hearts of his parents and of other adults in his family. This is a great advantage of integrated Catholic schools - that they may teach the parents by teaching the children.

Miss Mary Fokes

Saint Rose de Lima School

Learning is Easier

There is a great difference between teaching and learning. We can teach principles of justice and charity in a racially segregated school. We can teach that there is no essential difference between the races, that God loves everybody, that we must love everybody. But the pupils do not really learn these principles. They give assent to them but they do not understand and accept them.

Graduates of segregated schools - too many of them the Catholic parents of our Catholic pupils - heard all of these things in their own day in school. If these Catholic adults had truly learned these basic Catholic truths there would today be no problem of race relations. Solid learning means full acceptance of principles, and this means putting into practice the results of learning.

The integrated Catholic school removes the vacuum of merely theoretical teaching; it takes away also the vacuous apologetic evasions of answers through which the teacher has to go when the pupil asks "why?" Learning is easier when the pupil can actually see the democratic and religious principles of human unity being put into practice in the classroom. The child learns what he lives, and he learns brotherhood more easily if he is allowed to live it.

Prayer

O GOD, MY HEAVENLY FATHER, WHOSE LOVE CREATED ME AND ALL OTHER CHILDREN OF MEN AS MEMBERS OF ONE HUMAN FAMILY, ALL DIFFERENT YET ALL SHARING THE SAME NATURE AND DESTINY; GIVE ME THE GRACE THIS DAY TO ACT WITH THE KINDNESS OF YOUR LOVE TOWARDS THOSE I AM MOST TEMPTED TO CONDEMN, RIDICULE, DESPISE OR HURT IN ANY WAY, SO THAT IN SERVING THEM, I SERVE NOT SELF BUT YOU, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, YOUR SON AND MY BROTHER, IN WHOM WE ARE ALL ONE. AMEN.

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✠ JOSEPH F. RUMMEL,
Archbishop of New Orleans.